

Sustainability in Sports Marketing and Management

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Sustainability in Sports Marketing and Management

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Titles of each session paper, authors, and affiliations:

1. Athlete's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Basketball Players from Romanian National League

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2. Club's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports: Corporate Sustainability of Turkish Basketball SuperLeague Clubs

Gulberk Gultekin Salman, *Bahcesehir University, Turkey*; Ceyda Aysuna, *Marmara University, Turkey*; Gulsah Akkaya, *Marmara University, Turkey*; Gokce Dayi, *Bahcesehir University, Turkey*

3. Consumer's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Football Fans from Romania and Turkey

Mihai Orzan, *Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*; Hakan Yilmaz, *Bilgi University, Turkey*; Mehmet Akpinar, *Halic University, Turkey*; Gulberk Gultekin Salman, *Bahcesehir University Turkey*; Mihaela Constantinescu, *Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

4. Major Sporting Events on Sustainability Spectrum: Stakeholder's Involvement with Environmental, Economic, and Social Dimensions

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Abstract for the Special Session:

In the last decade, sport has been seen both as the problem and the solution for sustainability (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023). The debate in the specialized literature and the business environment hasn't yet shifted the balance towards good or bad.

The negative effects refer to the impact of major sports events on the local population and environment (carbon footprint, abandoned venues, work force exploitation, etc.), the inequality between men and women in terms of opportunities and payment, corruption and lack of transparency, exploitation of third-countries workforce for sports goods manufacturing, etc.

The positive ones focus on sense of belonging and social inclusion, health (fighting against overweight issues, obesity, diabetes or heart diseases), use of recycled materials for sports goods manufacturing (such as snickers from plastic found in the ocean), the power of sport as an educational platform considering that athletes are seen as role models in the society.

The main objective of this special session is to tilt the balance towards the enabler role of sports in the sustainability process, moreover showing how specialists from marketing and management can empower all the stakeholders to drive the change towards a sustainable future. Building on the beautiful relationships and experiences found in the sports world, we think that the organizations from this sector have a rare opportunity to influence the lifestyles of millions of people worldwide by setting the standard and showcasing environmental, social and economic sustainability strategies.

This triad model for sustainability – environmental, social and economic – will represent the base for all 4 papers included in our special session, showing how 4 types of stakeholders from the sports world – clubs, athletes, fans and event organizers – can bring their contribution to a more sustainable future. In order to have also a basis of comparison, two papers will focus on the same sport showing the approach of clubs and athletes from the first leagues from Romania and Turkey. The third paper will be itself a comparison between Romanian and Turkish football fans. With the fourth paper we will also cover the Western Europe perspective on sustainability in sports, with a focus on big events.

The present session has four articles, as follows:

1) Athlete's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Basketball Players from Romanian National League (M. Constantinescu, S.C. Caescu, M.C. Orzan, A. Orindaru, A. Pachitanu, F. Botezatu); this paper focuses on Romanian Basketball National League players perspective on sustainability, in order to identify their openness and future actions to be taken;

- 2) Club's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports: Corporate Sustainability of Turkish Basketball SuperLeague Clubs (G.G. Salman, C. Aysuna, G. Akkaya, G. Dayi); in this study, economic, social and environmental sustainability development from the perspectives of teams' general managers and club managers in the Turkish Basketball Superleague will be examined;
- 3) Consumer's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Football Fans from Romania and Turkey (M. Orzan, H. Yilmaz, M. Akpınar, G.G. Salman, M. Constantinescu); fans' perceptions of economic, environmental and social sustainability related to football in Turkey and Romania will be examined and compared;
- 4) Major Sporting Events on Sustainability Spectrum: Stakeholder's Involvement with Environmental, Economic, and Social Dimensions (K. Mukanova, A. Feuillet, S. Latif, M. Desbordes, C. Hautbois); this paper analyzes the sustainability spectrum various sporting event stakeholders are placed in and what role they play in addressing this challenge.

Abstract for each of the 4 papers from the Special Session on ‘Sustainability in Sports Marketing and Management’

1. Athlete’s Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Basketball Players from Romanian National League

Mihaela Constantinescu, Stefan Claudiu Caescu, Mihai Cristian Orzan, Andreea Orindaru, Andreea Pachitanu, Florina Botezatu

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The specialized literature and the business environment consider sport both as the problem and the solution for sustainability (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023). The debate hasn’t yet shifted the balance towards good or bad, as there are both negative effects of sports on sustainability (carbon footprint, abandoned venues, work force exploitation, inequality between men and women in terms of opportunities and payment, corruption and lack of transparency, etc.) as well as positive ones (social inclusion, health improvement, use of recycled materials for sports goods manufacturing, the power of sport as an educational platform considering that athletes are seen as role models in the society, etc.).

The recognition of the importance of the relationship between sport and the natural environment dates back to the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, when for the first time concerns regarding the negative impact on the environment were addressed by carefully planning the construction of facilities (Trendafilova et al., 2014). This is the reason for which the specialized literature focuses on a correction course, bringing in front the opportunities that sport has to participate in the sustainability development process. Sport can have both a direct and indirect impact on sustainability (Schmidt, 2006). The direct one is represented by actions taken by sports organizations and athletes in relation to their ecological footprint, inclusion policies, financial transparency, etc. The indirect impact is determined by sport’s role as a platform for raising awareness and promoting sustainability.

Out of all the stakeholders from the sports worlds (clubs, teams, athletes, sponsors, fans, event organizers, public bodies, etc.), this paper focuses on the athlete’s perception on sustainability, as he represents the face of sports in front of fans and the general public, thus all actions taken towards sustainability in sports should include this important component.

The specialized literature on athlete’s sustainable behavior presents a lot of approaches, starting from the sports organization approach when it comes to their athletes, hence it appears the commodity-community orientations debate (Dohlsten, Barker-Ruchti & Lindgren,

2021). The sport as commodity orientation focuses on authority and efficiency, and results and athletic progression, whereas the sport as community orientation, in contrast, is characterized by a focus on process, athletes as human beings and a focus on individual needs. The importance of athletes in the fight for a more sustainable future is seen in the major sports organizations policies, such as the one from the International Olympic Committee (IOC Athlete 365) or the one initiated by the World Athletics (Athlete Sustainability Guide). Also, there are a lot of individual initiatives from the athletes themselves, where we see their venture into the relatively unknown territory on sustainable behavior and their attempts to be a role model for the general public.

What this paper is trying to bring as an innovative approach to athlete's sustainable behavior is the fact that we try to identify both the athlete's own initiatives towards a more sustainable individual behavior, as well as his openness to the club's sustainable policies, thus his participation to a collaborative plan, alongside his teammates, managers, sponsors, fans, public bodies, etc.

The novelty of our study relies also in the market that will be covered – Eastern Europe, more precisely Romania, as sustainability here is a rather new policy in general, not just related to sports, which emphasizes the need for data in order to identify what athletes know about sustainability, how they feel about it and what they do in order to have a more sustainable future. Considering that the focus will be on the Romanian men basketball national league (meaning the first division), we see the opportunity of having different perspectives between the Romanian and the foreign players, especially if they have been exposed to championships from more developed countries.

The study will be conducted through a direct quantitative research (survey), with respondents from all teams playing in the first division, balancing the sample in terms of players' nationality, age, income and education, as these are important factors for sustainability.

The results of our study will show at first the players' attitude towards sustainability in general, detailing the three dimensions – cognitive (what they know), affective (how they feel) and conative (what they do about it). The second part will be dedicated to analyzing the athletes' initiatives on social, environmental and economic sustainability in their world – sports. The last section will be focused on the role that the athletes are willing to play in the clubs' sustainability policy, determining their openness and involvement in sustainable actions proposed or imposed by the clubs.

2. Club's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports: Corporate Sustainability of Turkish Basketball SuperLeague Clubs

Gulberk Gultekin Salman, *Bahcesehir University, Turkey*; Ceyda Aysuna, *Marmara University, Turkey*; Gulsah Akkaya, *Marmara University, Turkey*; Gokce Dayi, *Bahcesehir University, Turkey*

With the recent changes in the external environment of sport clubs, the need for a sustainable growth and development has been a greater concern. The pandemic, economic recessions, environmental crisis, social changes and more have all contributed to the importance of sustainable development. In 1987, the United Nation's (UN) report on The World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development is defined as "development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The concern for a better future has been a vital matter, especially, in the last decade and many organizations are working towards a better tomorrow. Sport being a common entertainment and socialization ground for many people, whether they participate or spectate, in 2017, UN's convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2017) recognized sport organizations having an essential lead and responsibility to influence participants and fans in promoting sustainable behavior (Trail & McCullough, 2018; Trail & McCullough 2020). Unfortunately, sustainability issues of clubs in Europe, along with the less experienced managerial approaches, do not beyond commercial business where finding sponsors and maintaining day-to-day transactions of keeping the operations going is insufficient, contrary to the American model and structure (Varmus, Kubina, Koman, & Ferenc, 2018, pg.2-3). There has been a number of studies and practices on the social responsibility (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006; Babiak 2010; Anagnostopoulos, Byers, & Shilbury, 2014; Parent, 2018), environmental responsibility (Hognestad, Giulianotti, Thorpe, Langseth & Gils, 2022; Trendafilova, McCullough, Pfahl, Nguyen, Casper, & Picariello, 2014; McCullough, Pfahl, & Nguyen, 2016; Atalay, 2021) and economics (Storm, 2010; Castellanos & Sánchez, 2007; Roberts, Roche, Jones, & Munday, 2016) of sport organizations. Although there are variety of perspectives to be considered in sustainability in sports such as sporting events, amateur sports, college sports, sport federations, professional sport teams, sponsors, sport venues, sporting goods companies or sport tourism (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023, p.3), this study will concentrate on professional sport teams in Turkish Basketball Super League. There are 16 teams in the Turkish Basketball Super League and the level of competition is high. From these teams, Fenerbahce and

Anadolu Efes have become Euroleague champions a number of times; Bahcesehir Koleji was the winner of FIBA EuroCup; Banvit and Karsiyaka were runner-ups in FIBA Champions league. The success of the teams does not necessarily mean their involvement to sustainability practices. That is why this study aims to understand sustainability practices and approaches of professional basketball clubs competing in the Super League of Turkey. The methodology for this study will be exploratory research and qualitative in nature, and in-depth interviews will be used to explore sustainability perceptions and practices of basketball clubs. Club managers and team general managers will be interviewed to understand the approaches and practices in sustainable growth and development in economic, social and environmental sustainability perspectives. The findings will reveal whether the clubs already took initiatives to face sustainability issues; the results will reveal the vital findings of sustainability practices and protection for the future; and recommendations and implications will be provided.

3. Consumer's Perspective on Sustainability in Sports. Case Study: Football Fans from Romania and Turkey

Mihai Orzan, *Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*; Hakan Yilmaz, *Bilgi University, Turkey*; Mehmet Akpınar, *Halic University, Turkey*; Gulberk Gultekin Salman, *Bahcesehir University Turkey*; Mihaela Constantinescu, *Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

Studies on fandom and fan involvement have been great topic of interest in the past and still is popular to this day. Professional sport organizations aspire and aim to have a loyal fan base because through following and supporting come the success (Dwyer, Greenhalgh, & LeCrom, 2015). Thus, fostering on fan loyalty is vital to teams and clubs; on the other hand, identifying with a team or club is also important to fans. Throughout the years, studies on loyalty (Depken, 2000; Wu, Tsai, & Hung, 2012; Funk & James, 2006), involvement (Capella 2002; Shank & Beasley, 1998), identification (Sutton et al., 1997; Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2008), psychological connection (Funk & James, 2001; Schroy et al., 2016; Pu & James, 2017), points of attachment (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Kwon, Trail & Anderson, 2005), behavior (Ridinguer & James, 2002; Parker & Fink, 2010), attitude (Funk & James, 2004; Heere & Dickson, 2008, Parker & Fink, 2010; Behrens & Uhrich, 2020), motivation (Wann, 1995; Schroy et al., 2016), and more have been conducted to understand the fans. Nevertheless, they are the vital players in the success of professional clubs and if they are not happy or if they feel like their well-being is threatened, the sustainability of the relationship between the fan and the club might be hindered whereas the organizational commitment sways the wellbeing of fans (Pan, Wu, Morrison, Huang & Huang, 2018). Because the fans have a strong emotional connection to their clubs, these clubs are highly effective in the society (Walzel, Robertson & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). This is an indication of how influential clubs can be in terms of creating awareness and need for not only environmental (Inoue & Kent, 2012; Kellison & Cainfrone, 2020), but also social and economic sustainability (Kellison & Kim, 2014). Kellison and Kim (2014) argue that clubs can assess their sustainability strategy through perceptions of fans which will have an impact on fans' favorable social, environmental and economic behavior. Cayolla et al.'s (2023) findings reveal that clubs with initiatives of pro-environmental sustainability influences fans' diligence and possibility of environmental, economic and socially favorable behavior. The objective of this study is twofold: one is to understand football fans' perceptions of economic, social and environmental sustainability in Turkey and Romania; and the other to compare two countries'

fans in terms of their perceptions to see the differences and similarities. The study is a descriptive study and the data will be collected with a questionnaire with a convenience sample from Turkey and Romania. A multidimensional scale will be utilized to operationalize economic, social and environmental sustainability. The results of the study will reveal similarities and differences of football fans, especially crucial in these times of internationalization of sports clubs and competitions.

Although, according to UEFA and FIFA, Turkey and Romania are not similarly ranked when it comes to the value and quality of national football, Turkey being higher in rank (UEFA, 2023; FIFA, 2023), this comparative study bring a novelty approach to sustainability studies, in order to show what is already accepted by both nations and what we can learn one from the other. So, as indicated by Kellison and Kim (2014), this study can help football clubs to shape their approaches according to the perceptions of fans to be more environmentally, socially and economically competent for the future.

4. Major Sporting Events on Sustainability Spectrum: Stakeholder's Involvement with Environmental, Economic, and Social Dimensions

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Sustainability is one of the major global challenges facing society nowadays. Sport, being a social activity that is practiced globally and one of the most thriving industries from an economic standpoint, is not immune to this challenge (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023). It can advocate sustainability but also be part of the problem. Therefore, examining sustainability in the sporting event context will provide an understanding of the current engagement of stakeholders within this matter. The event involves a myriad of stakeholders coming from sports organizations (event organizers, event owners, other sports federations, athletes, fans etc.) and sport-related organizations (public actors, sponsors, sports venue owners etc.). Given many definitions of sustainability, we are interested in social, environmental, and economic characteristics because of the inclusivity of the concept, examining the latest editions of the one-off/recurring, nonprofit, and for-profit major sporting events.

Talking about economic or financial sustainability, it is one of the key considerations among all three that in a way insures the environmental and social sustainability dimensions. The French Ministry of Sport ranks the importance of sports mega events in three levels. The first level of sports events is composed of four events: Summer and Winter Olympics, football and rugby World Cups. These competitions can be considered as Sports Mega Events. The concept of financial sustainability is not clear and much studied in the literature. Thus, most of the studies in the sport concept are focused on financial vulnerability (Cordery, Sim, and Baskerville, 2013) or financial regulation (Dermit-Richard et al., 2019). Considering the high costs associated with hosting SME, and the difficulties for democratic countries to justify high level of public investment for short term event, the idea of sustainability might be fruitful to investigate for FIFA or IOC to prevent a disinterest to bid for SME. Indeed, the competition between countries to host SME has recently seen a great decrease of candidates. Thus, the Summer Olympics of 2024 and 2028 were attributed to the sole candidate remaining in the bidding process. It was the same for the Winter Olympics 2030 attributed recently to France and the football World Cup 2034 to Saudi Arabia. The interest to bid for these SME has shifted at the beginning of the 2010's towards more candidature from the BRICS (+ Qatar)

countries (Andreff, 2021) which might show a trend showing a certain unwillingness to pay the price to host such event.

Therefore, co-hosting is a new solution that emerged in the light of financial vulnerability.

Cohosting is the hosting of the event by two or more multiple nations. If economic sustainability is at the heart of this model, it is a major question to answer. Does this new format stimulate the reduction of hosting costs and economic and business leveraging for the event organizer (hosting federation and country)? Similarly, does such a model affect the economic viability of the event owner (the international sport governing body)? The perspectives from current co-hosted event organizers and owners will be provided.

Talking about environmental sustainability, we will focus on discussing Olympic Games and current measures taken by the recent event organizers. Event organizers feel the need to contribute to accelerate the pace of environmental change as they accept responsibility for the environmental footprint. Over the years, the sport event organizers have increasingly taken climate and environmental aspects into account in their commitments, as also can be seen formalized in the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020. Building on this momentum, Paris 2024 Organising Committee has made environmental responsibility a central part of its bid and its activities. Some of the key activities are relying on the existing venues and temporary structures, restricting car parking at venues, banning single use plastic, educating people during seven years through various mediums. Using this information as a starting point, we will try to critically analyze whether these initiatives from the event organizers are enough to make a considerable change in the event sector.

As for the final social sustainability dimension, we will focus on social legacy. As there is a need to understand the continuous social impact of major events on its host communities, the social and human capital outcomes were chosen to frame our discussion on the current commitment of event owners and organizers to these outcomes.

By doing this gap analysis across three sustainability dimensions in the event sector, our goal is to provide academic reflection on whether current event editions ensure a sustainable future for the global community.

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